

# Making Sure Stress Doesn't Hold Back Your Business

As a business owner, you have a lot on your plate. Sometimes it can leave you feeling like you're drowning, like you can't possibly take on one more task, let alone the 10 that are waiting for your attention. Most of us in this room have been there.

Running a small business — and trying to grow it — means wearing a lot of hats. It also means ploughing forward. Unfortunately, having so many different areas of business to deal with and plough through can get overwhelming. And that can lead to you saying “no” to anything new — even if it might help your business.

Business building interviews ... power team meetings ... even weekly BNI breakfast meetings. At times, it can be very tempting to simply say “no more!” But, if you want to keep your business healthy and grow your business, that's just not an option. You're not in business to say “no” to opportunity.

So how do you avoid becoming paralyzed by the overload?

1. Divide and conquer. It may be a cliché, but compartmentalizing is a must. With so many different parts of your business to worry about, it's easy to let troubles in one area of your business colour your thinking about the rest. And that can lead you to thinking that all is lost - when it really isn't. Time out. The only thing that's lost is your perspective. Keep separate issues separate — especially your feelings about them.
2. Learn how to prioritize. It is critical that you uncover the sequence of events and decisions that drives your business. Do not become distracted by low-level priorities while major issues are left unaddressed. Sit down, write out tasks as you think of them, and then reorganize that list from most important to least important. Need help? Ask people who you trust and then be prepared to listen to their advice.
3. Make a little bit of progress each day. Ticking things off a “to-do” list is good for your sense of accomplishment. Schedule time daily to address each area of your business. And stick to it. Making daily headway will help you feel like you're in control and it will give you the mental space to consider new ideas/challenges.
4. Plan a focus day. Dedicate an entire day to one area of your business, a product or customer retention, for example. Declare a Focus Day, don't respond to emails, texts, or calls that aren't related to what you're focusing on. Put a reminder on

your calendar. These are things you really need to do anyway so put aside a day to resolve, complete or decide on important issues in your business.

5. Delegate. Easier said than done. Be honest and review which tasks you are NOT skilled in. Find a person or business service that can do these tasks better and faster than you. Then put them to work. Your time will be better spent doing what you wanted to do when you started your business.
6. Take care of yourself. Staying physically and mentally fit is crucial. If you are ill or unfocused your business will suffer – find time to look after yourself even if it's only 15 minutes a day.
7. See tasks as opportunities. This may be most important of all. Instead of looking at business challenges as tasks, see them for what they are. Each business interaction, each step you take, gets you closer to new solutions and new potential. Look at that list of to-dos as a list of possibilities that lead to business opportunities you haven't thought of yet.

So the next time you feel like you just can't handle any more, stop and get organized. The rewards will be a healthy growing business.